

ash.
action on smoking and health

political
bulletin

Welcome to ash political bulletin, the first in what will be regular political briefings from Action on Smoking and Health (ASH).

ASH is a campaigning public health charity working for a comprehensive societal response to tobacco aimed at achieving a sharp reduction and eventual elimination of the health problems caused by tobacco. 120,000 people per year die from smoking-related diseases in the UK and tobacco is a major cause of illness and health inequalities. Tobacco is a powerfully addictive drug that most of its users would like to quit using.

What we want...

- Raising tobacco prices through the tax system
- Tackling smuggling and the role played by tobacco companies in promoting it
- A comprehensive NHS response to nicotine addiction and support for cessation
- Major public communications programmes aimed at encouraging all smokers to quit and non-smokers not to start
- Increasing provision of smoke-free places – at work, in public places, and through persuasion and awareness-raising, in the home – with a view to eliminating all involuntary smoke exposure
- Consumer protection measures such as improved warnings, comprehensive risk communication; plain packaging, bans on misleading claims, control over retailers
- Regulation of tobacco as a dangerous drug with controls over the contents of cigarettes and smoke, and any health claims made in relation to tobacco and nicotine
- Harm reduction strategies for those who cannot or will not stop using nicotine

We are always happy to help decision-makers with information, briefing, policy analysis and comment. Don't hesitate to get in touch.

Our contact details are:

- www.ash.org.uk contains a comprehensive database of information on smoking and tobacco control issues. It includes factsheets and reports dealing with statistics, science and policy issues.
- Ian Willmore (Public Affairs Manager) can also be reached on 078 8764 1344 or ian.willmore@ash.org.uk
- **ASH Scotland** 0131 225 4725
- **ASH Wales** 029 2064 1101



The director writes...

Dear friends,

A delegation organised by ASH met Secretary of State Tessa Jowell on February 3, two days before she was due to meet leaders of the hospitality industry to discuss how they could expand smokefree areas in bars and restaurants. At our meeting she gave us her absolute assurance that she wanted to see all public places smokefree, an assurance that we will hold her to.

Our delegation included Sir Alexander Macara, Chairman of the National Heart Forum, Professor Carol Black from the Royal College of Physicians, Dr Sam Everington from the BMA, Professor Alex Markham from Cancer Research UK and Deborah Arnott from ASH. We made clear that our preference was for national legislation to ensure smokefree workplaces for all. However, if the Government were to continue pursuing the voluntary approach we insisted that much higher standards were needed and ventilation was not an appropriate solution. She has agreed to meet us again to discuss progress after the Wanless review (of public health policy) is published.

Our understanding is that at their meeting with Ms Jowell the hospitality trade delegates were asked to come back within two months with concrete proposals, and were given a very strong steer that ventilation is not the right solution to smoke-filled venues. We will be watching them.

Deborah Arnott
Action on Smoking and Health

Secondhand Smoke Bill for Lords

Lord Faulkner of Worcester is to table a Lords Private Members Bill on secondhand smoke in the workplace. It is likely to follow closely the Bill on the subject produced by Tessa Jowell MP in 1994. In Government, Ms Jowell is now the Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport, with government responsibility for the hospitality trade, including pubs and restaurants. Ms Jowell's Bill would have prevented any employee from being required to work in a place which permitted smoking, and would have required strict smoking restrictions in all enclosed public spaces.

Culture Secretary Calls in Hospitality Trade

Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell has called in hospitality trade employers to press for faster action under the Public Places Charter. Although the Government continues to rule out national legislation banning smoking at work, Ms Jowell says she wants to see greater progress under the "voluntary approach". She says that:

"I would like to see the hospitality industry tap into the huge numbers of non-smokers and reformed smokers, like me, who want to enjoy a night out without infringing the rights of those who want to smoke. Government can increase the choices for non-smokers, the industry can tap into a lucrative market, and nobody will be bullied into a lifestyle they do not wish to join."

Press association 02/01/04

ASH and the tobacco control lobby have been sharply critical of the Public Places Charter, which allows pubs to comply with the Charter simply by placing a small notice on the door stating that smoking is allowed throughout. In its progress report published in April 2003, the Charter Group revealed that 46% of restaurants and pubs surveyed still allowed smoking throughout, with 22% having separate smoking and non-smoking areas. Less than 1% have banned smoking completely.

Smokefree pubs increased profits by 7% in a pilot study in Staffordshire

Ireland ...

The Republic of Ireland will shortly introduce its comprehensive ban on smoking in all enclosed places of work (other than private dwellings).

The Public Health (Tobacco) Act 2002 permits the Minister for Health and Children (Michael Martin) to regulate, prohibit or restrict the smoking of tobacco products in all or part of licensed premises and the draft form of the Tobacco Smoking (Prohibition) Regulations 2003 implicitly refers to a smoking ban in licensed premises.

The new law was due to come into effect on January 1 2004, but the Irish Health Ministry spokesman said the implementation order has been revoked by Martin pending a new date. The need to provide three months' notice to the European Commission in Brussels (under the EU Transparency Directive) has contributed to the delay, as have remaining issues about the detailed interpretation of the regulations and arranging the policing of the ban.

Scotland....

Stewart Maxwell MSP (SNP) is to promote a Private Member's Bill in the Scottish Parliament, to regulate smoking where food is supplied or consumed. In the absence of UK legislation or an Executive Bill with broader scope, this Bill could make a measurable difference to health in Scotland and is a positive first step towards smokefree public places.

Maureen Moore, Director of ASH Scotland, comments:

"We believe that it is time to abandon the voluntary approach to smoking in public places and introduce legislation to protect the health of the people of Scotland."

... and Northern Ireland

Nationalist SDLP health spokesperson Carmel Hanna will ask her colleagues to back a motion calling on the Government to ban smoking in bars, restaurants and other public places in Northern Ireland.

"We can learn from the progress of this legislation in the south of Ireland, where the somewhat brave decision to ban smoking in public places was made," she said. "The effects of passive smoking are much reported and it is unacceptable that those who chose not to smoke or who have struggled hard to give up smoking are forced to bear the effects of smoking anyway."

SDLP News Desk 20/01/04

In November the charity Macmillan Cancer Relief called on local councils in Northern Ireland to adopt a ban on smoking in public places.

Wales

Crossbencher Baroness Finlay of Llandaff has secured a second reading in the UK Parliament for her Public Places (Wales) Bill. Baroness Finlay said the Welsh Assembly had proposed the ban but required primary legislation in the UK Parliament to give it the necessary powers. Moving the Bill, Baroness Finlay quoted a Western Mail poll in support of action against secondhand smoke:

"An online poll recently conducted by the Western Mail, Wales's main newspaper, asked the question: 'would you visit a smoke-free pub?'. Twenty per cent responded saying, 'No, because I smoke'; 11 per cent said that they would visit any pub that sold beer; while 69 per cent replied, 'Yes, smoke-free air at last'.

3.4 million people in the UK have asthma and 80% of them say that passive smoking causes them breathing difficulties.

Secondhand Smoke Linked to Lung Disease in Young People

As many as one in nine young adults living in industrialized countries are at risk of developing a deadly lung condition known as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD). Smokers are particularly likely to get the disease. But people who inhale secondhand smoke are at risk too.

COPD is an umbrella term that describes a progressive reduction of airflow in and out of the lungs caused by bronchitis and emphysema. Smoking is the major cause of the disease.

A new study shows that initial symptoms of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease or COPD, such as persistent cough and phlegm, develop much earlier than is usually thought, and a growing number of young adults may already be on their way to developing irreversible COPD later in life.

17,000 children under the age of five are admitted to hospital every year as a result of passive smoking.

The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) criteria stages COPD from mild (stage I) to severe (stage IV). There is also a preclinical stage of COPD (stage 0) that can be used to identify people at greatest risk of developing the disease in their 50s and 60s, which is when it is most often diagnosed.

In a study published in the current issue of *Thorax*, researchers surveyed more than 18,000 adults aged 20-44 from:

- Europe,
- U.S.A
- Scandinavia,
- Australia
- New Zealand.

They found about 4% fell into COPD stages I-IV based on their reported symptoms.

But nearly 12% were classified as stage 0 or at risk for COPD in later life.

People who were in stages 0-III also shared some common characteristics. They were more likely to:

- Be moderate to heavy smokers
- Have been exposed to greater levels of noxious fumes or dust at work
- Have had more respiratory infections during childhood
- Be poorer than those with healthy lungs
- Use health-care services more frequently

The findings also show that occupational exposure to environmental tobacco smoke was positively associated with stage 0 - in other words those exposed were at risk of progressing to full COPD in later life.

Labour Suggests Local Councils May Be Given New Powers On Secondhand Smoke

Labour's next General Election manifesto may include new powers for local Councils to act on secondhand smoke in workplaces and enclosed public places.

The proposal is made in a major public consultation document recently launched by Prime Minister Tony Blair under the heading the "Big Conversation".

The "Big Conversation" document asks the following question:

"Should local authorities have new powers to introduce smoking bans at work and in public places?"

more information:

<http://www.bigconversation.org.uk/index.php?id=701>

ASH wants national legislation to end smoking in all workplaces, but would support local Councils being given significant new powers as a step in the right direction.

Later this year, ASH and the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health will be publishing a new guide for local decision-

ASH & Thompsons Warn Hospitality Trade of Legal Threat over Secondhand Smoke

The hospitality trade faces a rising threat of legal action from employees whose health is damaged by secondhand smoke, after a new tie-up between ASH and the UK's largest personal injury and trade union law firm Thompsons.

A registered letter was sent in early January this year to all the UK's leading hospitality trade employers, warning them that the "*date of guilty knowledge*" under the Health and Safety at Work Act is now past, and that employers should therefore know of the risks of exposing their staff to secondhand smoke. Employers who continue to permit smoking in the workplace are therefore likely to be held liable by the courts for any health

damage caused. ASH and Thompsons intend to use the letters in any future court cases as evidence that employers have been fully informed of the issue.

The ASH letter to hospitality employers points out that

"Secondhand smoke contains over 4,000 chemicals, including benzene, formaldehyde, arsenic, ammonia and hydrogen cyanide. The US Environmental Protection Agency has classified environmental tobacco smoke as a known human (class A) carcinogen. Exposure for just 30 minutes to secondhand smoke has been shown to reduce coronary blood flow. Long-term inhalers of secondhand smoke suffer an increased risk of a range of smoking-related diseases..."

Further steps by ASH and Thompsons to identify and pursue likely cases for compensation will be announced shortly.

80% of the population want to see smoking restricted in the workplace as the evidence of the dangers of breathing in other people's smoke become apparent.

Smoking and Health: All Party Group AGM

The All Party Parliamentary Group on Smoking and Health held its AGM on Tuesday 20th January in House of Commons Committee Room 17.

Officers of the Group for the coming year are:

Chair:	David Taylor MP	Labour
Joint Vice-Chairs:	Michael Fabricant	Conservative
	Lord Clement-Jones	Liberal Democrat
	Syd Rapson MP	Labour
Joint Secretaries:	John Robertson MP	Labour
	Lord Faulkner of Worcester	Labour
Treasurer:	Bob Russell	Liberal Democrat

Parliamentarians present were:

Peter Bottomley MP

Lord Faulkner of Worcester

Syd Rapson MP

John Robertson MP

David Taylor MP

Apologies from: John Austin MP, Dr Brian Iddon MP, Alan Simpson MP, Kelvin Hopkins MP, Julia Drown MP, Sir John Stanley MP, Henry Bellingham MP, Julie Morgan MP, John McDonnell MP, Peter Viggers MP, David Amess MP, Lord Clement-Jones, Ann Cryer MP, Kevin Barron MP.

The All Party Group AGM was addressed by Professor John Britton of the University of Nottingham, who spoke about the need for a new approach to tobacco and harm reduction. Professor Britton and the Royal College of Physicians have called for a new "Nicotine and Tobacco Regulatory Authority". Such a body would encourage the production and sale of less harmful nicotine delivery systems to cigarettes which would have the potential to hugely reduce the death toll amongst nicotine addicts. The RCP call is strongly supported by ASH.

The British Heart Foundation also showed and discussed their latest TV advertising campaign which uses stark images to show the heart damage that is caused by smoking – the adverts show fat dripping from the end of a lit cigarette. The advertising campaign has led to an excellent response from smokers motivated to quit.

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